

Proposed Resource Management Plan and Final Environmental Impact Statement

Volume 1

Surprise Field Office



May 2007





The Bureau of Land Management Today

Our Vision

To enhance the quality of life for all citizens through the balanced stewardship of America's public lands and resources.

Our Mission

To sustain the health, diversity, and productivity of the public lands for the use and enjoyment of present and future generations.

Our Values

To serve with honesty, integrity, accountability, respect, courage, and commitment to make a difference.

Our Priorities

To improve the health and productivity of the land to support the BLM multiple-use mission.

To cultivate community-based conservation, citizen-centered stewardship, and partnership through consultation, cooperation, and communication.

To respect, value, and support our employees, giving them resources and opportunities to succeed.

To pursue excellence in business practices, improve accountability to our stakeholders, and deliver better service to our customers.

BLM/CA/ES-2007-011 + 1790-1600

FES 07-16





United States Department of the Interior



BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

Surprise Field Office
602 Cressler Street
Cedarville, California 96104
(530) 279-6101
FAX: (530) 279-2171
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Dear Reader:

Enclosed for your review and comment is the Proposed Resource Management Plan (PRMP) and Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) for the Bureau of Land Management's (BLM's) Surprise Field Office. This document was prepared by BLM in concert with eight cooperating agencies, as well as from public comments received during the scoping phase and public comment period of this planning effort. The document contains both land use planning decisions and implementation decisions to provide planning structure to facilitate management of the Surprise Field Office. The PRMP is open for a 30-day review and protest period beginning on the date the Environmental Protection Agency publishes the Notice of Availability of the FEIS in the *Federal Register*.

The geographic planning area includes BLM managed public lands within the counties of Modoc and Lassen, California, and Washoe and Humboldt, Nevada. The overall intent of this PRMP is to develop a comprehensive management strategy that will guide the management of public lands administered by the Surprise Field Office into the future. This PRMP replaces ten former land use plans with a single, unified Surprise Field Office PRMP.

This PRMP and FEIS has been developed in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA), and the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976. The PRMP is largely based on the Preferred Alternative in the Draft Resource Management Plan/Environmental Impact Statement (RMP/EIS), which was released on April 28, 2006. This document contains the proposed plan, summary of changes made between the Draft RMP/EIS and PRMP, predictable impacts of the proposed plan, summary of the written and verbal comments received during the public review period of the Draft RMP/EIS, and responses to the comments received. Public comments resulted in the addition of clarifying text, but did not significantly change proposed management decisions. A Reader's Guide is included to help you navigate through the chapters of this document, and is located directly after the Abstract.

Any person who participated in the planning process for this PRMP, and has an interest which is or may be adversely affected, may protest approval of this PRMP and land use planning decisions contained within it (see 43 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) 1610.5-2) during this 30-day period. Only those persons or organizations who participated in the planning process leading to the PRMP may protest. The protesting party may raise only those issues submitted for the record during the planning process leading up to the publication of this PRMP. These issues may have been raised by the protesting party or others. New issues may not be brought into the record at the protest stage.

Protests must be filed with the BLM Director in writing. Regular mail protests should be sent to: Director (210), Attention – Brenda Williams, PO Box 66538, Washington DC 20035. Overnight mail should be sent to: Director (210), Attention – Brenda Williams, 1620 L Street, NW, Suite 1075, Washington DC 20036. Email and fax protests will not be accepted as valid protests unless the protesting party also provides the original letter by either regular or overnight mail postmarked by the close of the protest period. Under these conditions, BLM will consider the email or fax protest as an advance copy and it will receive full consideration. If you wish to provide BLM with such advance notification, please direct emails to Brenda_Hudgens-Williams@blm.gov and faxes to (202) 452-5112 (Attn: BLM Protest Coordinator).

IMPORTANT: In accordance with 43 CFR 1610.5-2, the protest must contain the information described in the following critical elements check list:

- The name, mailing address, and telephone number of the person filing the protest.
- The “interest” of the person filing the protest. (How will you be adversely affected by the approval or amendment of the resource management plan?)
- A statement of the part(s) of the PRMP, and the issue(s) being protested. (To the extent possible, this should reference specific pages, paragraphs, sections, tables, maps, or other items that are believed to be incorrect or incomplete.)
- A copy of all documents addressing the issue(s) that the protesting party submitted during the planning process OR a statement of the date they were discussed for the record.
- A concise statement explaining why the protestor believes the BLM State Director’s proposed decision is incorrect.

All of these elements are critical parts of your protest. Take care to document all relevant facts. As much as possible, reference or cite the planning documents, or available planning records (such as meeting minutes or summaries, correspondence).

The BLM Director will make every attempt to promptly render a decision on the protest. The decision will be in writing and will be sent to the protesting party by certified mail, return receipt requested. The decision of the BLM Director shall be the final decision of the Department of the Interior.

BLM’s practice is to make comments, including names and home addresses of respondents, available for public review. Before including your address, phone number, e-mail address, or other personal identifying information in your comment, be advised that your entire comment—including your personal identifying information—may be made publicly available at any time. While you can ask us in your comment to withhold from public review your personal identifying information, we cannot guarantee that we will be able to do so. All submissions from organizations and businesses, and from individuals identifying themselves as representatives or officials of organizations and businesses, will be available for public inspection in their entirety.

Unlike land use planning decisions, implementation decisions are not subject to protest under planning regulations but are subject to administrative remedies and review, primarily through appeals to the Office of Hearings and Appeals (Interior Board of Land Appeals). Implementation decisions generally constitute BLM’s final approval allowing on-the ground actions to proceed. Where implementation decisions are made as part of the land use planning process, they are still subject to the appeals process or other administrative review as prescribed by specific resource program regulations after BLM resolves the protests to land use planning decisions and makes a decision to adopt or amend the RMP.

These administrative remedies for final implementation decisions usually take the form of appeals to the Office of Hearings and Appeals, though for certain proposed or non-final implementation decisions, such as proposed grazing decisions, the regulations provide for an internal agency review (usually a protest to the Authorized Officer), which must be completed before the final implementation decision can be appealed to the Office of Hearing and Appeals. This type of protest to the Authorized Officer should not be confused with the protest of land use planning decisions to the BLM Director.

Upon resolution of any protests, an Approved Plan and Record of Decision (ROD) will be issued. The Approved Plan will be available to all parties through the “Planning” page of the BLM national website (<http://www.blm.gov>) or by mail upon request. The Approved RMP and ROD will include the appeals process for implementing decisions that may be appealed to the Office of Hearing and Appeals following its publication.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION: For further information or to have your name added to the project mailing list, contact Jeff Fontana, Public Affairs Officer, Bureau of Land Management, 2950 Riverside Dr., Susanville, CA 96130, or email your request to necarmp@ca.blm.gov.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: Copies of the PRMP/FEIS documents for the BLM Surprise Field Office have been sent to affected federal, state, and local government agencies and to interested parties. Copies of the PRMP/FEIS documents are available for public inspection at the BLM Surprise Field Office, 2950 Riverside Dr., Susanville, Calif. Interested persons may also review the PRMP/FEIS on the Internet at <http://www.blm.gov/ca/st/en/prog/planning.1.html>.

BLM would like to thank our cooperating agency partners that have worked so hard to help us complete this document. They have provided support and expertise to facilitate focusing the issues and developing alternatives to help resolve the many compelling resource concerns that face the Surprise Field Office. We would like to particularly recognize Lassen, Modoc, and Washoe Counties, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, California Department of Fish and Game, Nevada Department of Wildlife, and Nevada and California State Historic Preservation Offices as cooperating agencies on this document. Their experience and dedication has made this a better process and BLM looks forward to continuing to work with them to complete this planning effort. We also extend thanks to those individuals and organizations that have provided extensive information and many excellent ideas that have been considered during this process.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Lance Bishop". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Lance" and last name "Bishop" clearly distinguishable.

Lance Bishop
Acting Field Manager
Surprise Field Office

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**U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT**



**PROPOSED
RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PLAN
AND
FINAL ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT
STATEMENT
SURPRISE FIELD OFFICE
CEDARVILLE, CALIFORNIA**

Prepared by the
Surprise Field Office
May 2007

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mike Pool", is written over a horizontal line.

**Mike Pool
State Director, California**

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**SUPRISE FIELD OFFICE
PROPOSED RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PLAN / FINAL
ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT**

☐ Draft Environmental Impact Statement ☒ Final Environmental Impact Statement

Department of the Interior, Bureau of Land Management

Type of Action: ☒ Administrative ☐ Legislative

Abstract:

This Proposed Resource Management Plan / Final Environmental Impact Statement describes and analyzes the Preferred Alternative for managing the public lands administered by the Surprise Field Office in northeast California and northwest Nevada. The alternatives provide management recommendations to guide the multiple use management of all resources. Proposed areas of critical environmental concern, suitable wild and scenic river segments, and cultural resource management areas are also recommended.

Protest:

BLM planning regulations (43 CFR 1610.5-2) state that any person who participated in the planning process and has an interest which is or may be adversely affected may protest the BLM's approval or amendment of an RMP. You must file a protest with 30 days of the date that the Environmental Protection Agency publishes its Notice of Availability in the Federal Register.

For further information contact:

Planning Coordinator
Bureau of Land Management
Eagle Lake Field Office
2950 Riverside Drive
Susanville, California 96130
(530) 257-0456
FAX (530) 257-4831

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Readers' Guide

Introduction

The Surprise Proposed Resource Management Plan (PRMP) / Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) are divided into 5 chapters, and include maps (of the planning area and the Preferred Alternative), an Executive Summary, Appendices, a Glossary and Acronyms List, and a Bibliography.

Executive Summary

The Executive Summary addresses the entire document and highlights the key issues brought forth in the Preferred Alternative.

Chapter 1

Chapter 1 identifies the purpose and need for the plan, defines the planning area, and explains public participation in the planning process. This chapter identifies the planning criteria used as guidelines influencing all aspects of the process. These guidelines are based on law, regulation, and policy. Also included in this chapter is a description of the involvement of state, local, federal governments and tribal agencies. The issues developed through public participation and the planning processes are described herein. This chapter also includes a complete list of substantial changes made to PRMP from the Draft RMP.

Chapter 2

Chapter 2 incorporates the Preferred Alternative from the Draft RMP into the Proposed RMP/Final EIS. The PRMP includes a detailed description of the management goals, objectives, allocations and allowable uses, and guidelines for the Preferred Alternative. The actions in this Proposed RMP/Final EIS are designed to provide general management guidance in most cases. Specific projects for a given area or resource will be detailed in future activity plans or site-specific proposals developed as part of interdisciplinary project planning or other means. These plans and processes address more precisely how a particular area or resource is to be managed and additional National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) analysis and documentation would be conducted as needed.

An Alternatives Summary Table is included in this chapter. This table provides the reader a general summary of the key management actions for each of five alternatives, as developed for the Draft RMP.

An Impacts Summary Table is also included at the end of Chapter 2. This table provides the reader a comparison summary of the main adverse and beneficial impacts that would result from implementing each of five alternatives, as developed for the Draft RMP.

Maps are also supplied to assist the reader in comprehending proposed management actions as described in Chapter 2.

Chapter 3

Chapter 3 (Affected Environment) provides an overview of the planning area and describes the existing situation for each of the resource programs. It describes both the biological and physical components that may be affected by the alternatives. Other components of the environment that will not be affected by the proposed actions such as climate are also described. Current management direction is briefly summarized for each program.

Chapter 4

Chapter 4 (Environmental Consequences) analyzes the beneficial and adverse effects of the Preferred Alternative. There are assumptions at the beginning of each specific resource programs to help guide the reader through the thought process. At the end of the analysis of each resource subject a discussion of the cumulative effects is provided.

Chapter 5

Chapter 5 summarizes key events in the consultation and coordination process prior to and during preparation of the PRMP/FEIS. It also lists those agencies, organizations, and individuals who were contacted or provided input into the planning process. Also listed are the technical specialists and editors who prepared this plan.

Appendices

The appendices include supplemental material referenced in the PRMP/ FEIS.

BLM Response to Public Comments

Copies of the public comment letters received can be viewed from the CD located in the back pocket of Volume 2. The BLM response to each comment (or groups of comments) is located in *Appendix O. Public Comment Responses*. Each comment is summarized as to content by resource subject, and the corresponding BLM response is given. Any changes which have been made to the document resulting from a public comment are also referenced in the table.

Changes between the Draft and Final

The Draft Eagle Lake Resource Management Plan and Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) was published in April 2006. The public had 90 days, until July 27, 2006, to submit comments on the Draft EIS. All comments received were seriously considered, and many were used to assist in making changes or clarifications to the Proposed RMP. Changes made to the DEIS include the following:

- Changes to the Draft EIS Preferred Alternative.
- Clarifications, corrections, supplemental analysis, and additional information added to various chapters of the PRMP/FEIS.
- One new map was created and is included with this document. These changes are listed in Chapter 1 under changes to the Preferred Alternative.

A complete list of substantial changes made to PRMP from the Draft RMP is included in Chapter 1.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) has prepared this Proposed Resource Management Plan (PRMP) and Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) to provide direction for managing public lands within the Surprise Field Office planning area and to analyze the environmental effects resulting from implementing the Preferred Alternative.

The Surprise Field Office includes approximately 1,220,644 acres of BLM-managed surface acres in northeastern California and northwest Nevada. The geographic area includes all BLM managed public lands within the counties of Modoc and Lassen, California, and Washoe and Humboldt, Nevada. BLM's mission is to sustain the health, diversity, and productivity of the public lands it manages for the use and enjoyment of present and future generations. The Surprise Proposed RMP was developed in coordination with the Alturas and Eagle Lake Field Office PRMPs to provide a consistent framework for managing public lands and resource uses in northeast California and northwest Nevada.

The PRMP is being prepared using BLM's planning regulations and guidance issued under the authority of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act (FLPMA) of 1976. A Final EIS is also included in this document to meet the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA), Council on Environmental Quality regulations for implementing NEPA (40 Code of Federal Regulations 1500-1508), and requirements of BLM's NEPA Handbook, H-1790-1.

Purpose and Need

The purpose of the Proposed Surprise Resource Management Plan (PRMP) is to provide guidance in the management of the lands and resources administered by the Surprise Field Office of BLM that will address major resource issues identified during scoping, and through internal and cooperating agency meetings. The Surprise RMP is meant to be comprehensive in nature, providing guidance for management of all uses and resources administered by BLM in the planning area.

Current management direction for the Surprise Field Office is included in three land use plans and later amendments prepared in the 1970s and early 1980s: Tulead-Home Camp Management Framework Plan (MFP), 1979; Cowhead-Massacre MFP, 1981, and Alturas RMP, 1984. New information, changed circumstances, and resource conditions since these plans were prepared require the revision of these existing plans into a single updated PRMP.

Population growth near Klamath Falls and Lakeview, Oregon, and the metropolitan areas of Reno, Nevada, and Redding, California, has increased the demand for use of public lands to support community needs and provide low-impact recreation. In addition to traditional consumptive uses, public interest has expanded in uses that emphasize aesthetic values such as open space and low-impact recreational opportunities. Changes in the type of recreation uses and the demand for diversified recreational opportunities can result in conflicts between uses and resource concerns that the old land use plans were not designed to address. Concerns include how these uses affect ecosystem health; local communities; and state, regional, and tribal interests.

Vegetation communities continue to be threatened by both the encroachment of western juniper into sagebrush-grasslands and from the invasion of annual exotic grasses and noxious weeds. The number of plant and animal species recognized by California and Nevada as special-status species has increased.

In addition, the decline of sage-grouse populations in the western United States has triggered BLM national, state, and local strategies with new guidance to address habitat requirements of the species.

New protocol agreements between BLM and State Historic Preservation Offices guide the protection, inventory, and conservation of cultural resources as they relate to other resources and land uses. Emphasis is being placed on finding and managing traditional cultural properties in accord with local tribes.

Planning and Scoping Process

BLM officially initiated the planning process for the Surprise Resource Management Plan (RMP) with publication of a Notice of Intent in the *Federal Register* on July 22, 2003 (Volume 68, Number 140). Issues related to resource management in the Surprise planning area were assembled during the scoping process consisting of public scoping meetings, field tours, socioeconomic workshops, and interactions with federal, state, tribal, and county collaborators.

BLM hosted six public scoping meetings in August and September 2003. A total of 205 people attended these meetings. Four meetings were held within the planning area. Other meetings were held in Redding, California, and Reno, Nevada, to ensure that BLM heard the concerns of user groups residing outside the planning area. BLM also conducted a scoping meeting in the field in August 2003. A community workshop was conducted to discuss economics and social values in December 2003.

The scoping process generated 15 key issues to be addressed in the RMP. These issues, listed below, and summarized in Chapter 1, were used to develop alternatives and are addressed in other sections of the resource management plan (e.g., effects on local economies).

1. How should upland ecosystems be managed?
2. How will forestry issues be managed, and how will forest resources be utilized?
3. How will water resources be managed and utilized?
4. How will visual resources be managed and preserved?
5. How should riparian areas and wetlands be managed?
6. How will wildland fire and prescribed fire be managed and utilized?
7. How should vehicular access and travel be managed on public lands?
8. How should the public lands be managed to sustain the traditional practices and traditional cultural properties of Native American cultures?
9. How should the public lands be managed to meet the needs of local communities?
10. How will grazing and rangelands be managed?
11. What lands are available for energy and mineral development?
12. What lands will be identified for retention, exchange, disposal, and acquisition?
13. How will recreation opportunities be managed?
14. How will fish, wildlife, and special status species be managed?
15. How should special resource values and special management areas be designated and managed?
16. How will air quality be managed?

17. How will paleontological resources be protected and managed?

18. How will the PRMP planning process be organized?

The Draft Surprise Resource Management Plan and Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) was published in April 2006. The public had 90 days, until July 27, 2006, to submit comments on the Draft EIS. During this period, BLM held seven public comment meetings.

The public comment period generated 36 comment letters from individuals and groups. The approximate number of comments that BLM analyzed and responded to was 547. These are summarized in Appendix J of this document.

All comments received were seriously considered, and many were used to assist in making changes or clarifications to the Proposed RMP. Changes made to the DEIS include the following:

- Changes to the Draft EIS Preferred Alternative.
- Clarifications, corrections, supplemental analysis, and additional information added to various chapters of the FEIS/PRMP.
- One new map was created and is included with this document.

A complete list of substantial changes made to PRMP from the Draft RMP is included in Chapter 1.

Collaboration

BLM approaches planning with community-based collaboration, in which interested groups and people—often with varied or opposing interests—work together to devise solutions with broad public support for managing BLM-administered lands. Cooperating local, state, tribal, and federal agencies have been part of the planning team for the RMPs to the fullest extent possible. During plan implementation BLM will continue partnerships with these public and local, state, and tribal governments and agencies to select high priority projects and to resolve emerging issues.

The Council of Environmental Quality defines a cooperating agency as any agency that has jurisdiction by law or special expertise for proposals covered by National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) (40 CFR 1501.6). Any federal, state, or local government jurisdiction with such qualifications may become a cooperating agency by agreement with the lead agency. The following are formal cooperating agencies for this RMP:

- Lassen and Modoc Counties, California;
- Washoe County, Nevada;
- U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service;
- California Department of Fish and Game;
- Nevada Department of Wildlife; and
- Nevada and California State Historic Preservation Offices.

The Northeast California Resource Advisory Council (RAC) contributed issues and reviewed goals, objectives, and management alternatives. Other groups that participated in the planning process include Humboldt County, Nevada; Fort Bidwell Community Council; and Modoc-Washoe Experimental Stewardship Group.

Management Alternatives

BLM developed management alternatives for the Surprise Field Office Draft RMP using input and comments from public scoping meetings, written comments, as well as from staffs of BLM and other cooperating agency partners. NEPA regulations and BLM resource management planning regulations require the formulation of a reasonable range of alternatives that seek to address identified planning issues and management concerns. Each alternative must be evaluated to ensure that it would be consistent with resource goals and objectives, and current laws, regulations, and policy.

Alternatives are developed to establish a framework to evaluate the potential impacts on the planning area that might occur as a result of implemented management decisions. The five management alternatives developed for the Eagle Lake RMP are detailed in this section, including:

No Action Alternative (required by NEPA): Retains current management through guidance and direction from current policies and existing management plans.

Alternative 1. Resource / Economic Development: Emphasizes commodity production from BLM resources in accordance with local economies and land use plans from local communities and counties.

Alternative 2. Ecosystem Restoration or Protection: Maximizes efforts to maintain, restore, or improve components of the ecosystem using natural ecosystem processes.

Alternative 3. Traditional or Historical Uses: Emphasizes traditional community uses of resources and/or emphasizes historical uses and values.

Preferred Alternative: The Preferred Alternative was “crafted” from all of the other alternatives and combines management actions from all four of the above listed alternatives. This alternative has been designed and selected to best meet the purpose and need of the plan as described in Chapter 1 and to meet desired future conditions, goals, and objectives of individual and combined resources and resource uses.

The Surprise PRMP provides a detailed description of management actions for 22 resource subjects. The desired future condition, goals, objectives, and management actions for each major resource area are discussed in detail in Chapter 2. The highlights of management actions under the Preferred Alternative for each resource subject are listed below.

Key Management Actions under the Preferred Alternative

Air Quality

- Manage prescribed fires (500 – 5,000 acres per year) to reduce impacts to air quality.

Cultural and Paleontological Resources

- Develop three on-site cultural interpretive areas.
- Designate three archeological areas of critical environmental concern.
- Develop two cultural resource management areas.

Energy & Minerals

- Manage 980,442 acres as ‘Open’ to mineral leasing under standard terms and conditions.
- Manage 1,220,644 acres as ‘Open’ to locatable minerals.
- Manage 1,037,063 acres as ‘Open’ to saleable minerals.

Fire Management

- The NorCal Fire Management Plan identifies aggressive, full suppression as the appropriate management response (AMR) under conditions of severe fire intensity, especially in the wildland urban interface. However, exceptions may be made where resource objectives could safely be achieved.
- Under conditions of low fire intensity, a less aggressive AMR, such as containment/confinement, would be implemented in previously identified areas likely to benefit from wildland fire use.
- Manage wildland fires using the Appropriate Management Response (AMR):
 - Full suppression AMR - 891,695 acres
 - Full range of AMR suppression options - 328,949 acres

Forestry Resources

- Manage all forests for improved forestland health and do not authorize timber production and harvest of commercial forestlands.
- Restore forestland health on commercial forestlands through fuels reduction treatments using mechanical and prescribed fire treatments at a rate of 25 to 150 acres per year.
- Implement reforestation projects on commercial forestlands and allow post-fire timber salvage sales.
- Manage low-site forestlands and woodlands for fuelwood removal, removal of invasive juniper to improve land health, and for biomass production.
- Allow public woodcutting on 119,426 acres of commercial and non-commercial forest and woodlands. Target locations with invasive western juniper to aid in fuels reduction work.
- Commercial, non-commercial, and free-use firewood cutting would be conducted on level or gently sloping locations with stable soils.
- Close sensitive resource areas to public woodcutting of invasive juniper, e.g., wilderness study areas (WSAs), research natural areas (RNAs), and areas of critical environmental concern (ACECs), and areas of special status and special interest species.
- Allow temporary road construction, on a case-by-case basis, where deemed necessary for the management of commercial and low-site forests and juniper woodlands.

Fuels Management

- Implement fuels treatments through mechanical, prescribed fire, and biological methods to reduce build-up of hazardous fuels, provide fuel breaks, and create defensible space in communities at risk.
- Teach classes in local schools and fire safety council meetings regarding fire protection and hazard reduction, and the natural role of fire in the ecosystem.
- Implement hazardous fuels reduction treatments using various methods:
 - Prescribed fire and mechanical treatments: 500 – 5,000 acres/year
 - Biological treatments: 0 – 25 acres/year
 - Chemical treatments: 0 – 500 acres/year

Lands and Realty

- Prioritize acquisition of lands within and adjacent to wilderness study areas, wild and scenic rivers, areas of critical environmental concern, and conservation and scenic easements. Also acquire lands with high resource values.
- Prioritize retention of BLM lands that have high public resource values. Allow exchanges when private parcels have higher resource values than BLM lands.
- Prioritize potential disposal of BLM administered lands that are small tracts, difficult to manage, or do not contain high resource values.

Rights-of-Way

- Wilderness study areas would be designated as rights-of-way exclusion zones. All proposals must meet non-impairment criteria, which prohibit permanent facilities unless they are grandfathered, they have valid existing rights, or they provide access to private inholdings.
- Manage the Bitner ACEC as a right-of-way exclusion zone.
- Create rights-of-way avoidance zones in the Massacre Rim and Rahilly-Gravelly ACECs (45,827 acres) and important wildlife habitat areas.
- Allow development of existing utility corridors for expanded use up to 1 mile wide.
- Restrict development of existing communication sites to areas previously disturbed, except where needed for BLM management and upgrade.

Livestock Grazing

- Maintain livestock grazing within 49 allotments on 1,445,443 acres.
- Authorize 92,465 animal unit months annually.
- Comply with the Approved Northeastern California and Northwestern Nevada Standards and Guidelines for Livestock Grazing.
- Areas burned by wild or prescribed fire would be rested from livestock grazing for a minimum of two growing seasons.
- Livestock salting would not be allowed within ¼ mile of springs, meadows, NRHP-quality archaeological sites, streams, and aspen areas. Location of salting stations would be determined by BLM in consultation with livestock permittees.
- Maintain 5,500 acres of existing livestock exclosures. Meadows and aspen stands of significant value to wildlife will receive priority for additional livestock exclusion. When fencing natural water sources, water would be provided outside fences for livestock, wildlife, and wild horses.
- The needs of wildlife and wild horses would be considered in water developments for livestock grazing. Raptor perch sites would be minimized on fences and water developments in important sage grouse habitat. Water would be retained and provided at ground level in all livestock water developments. Natural riparian habitat, and a substantial portion of the surrounding cover, would be protected for wildlife use where water is developed from natural sources.
- Utilization levels will not exceed 40%–60% on key species of grasses, forbs, and shrubs. Guideline number 16 of the *Standards and Guidelines for Livestock Grazing* would be implemented on allotments not meeting Standards for Rangeland Health at current forage utilization levels.
- Maintain domestic sheep permits in specific grazing allotments (Tuledad, Selic-Alaska, and Red Rock Lake), unless operator elects to convert or vacate allotment.
- Allow trailing of domestic sheep on a case-by-case basis.

Recreation and Visitor Services

- All areas not managed under a special designation would be managed as the extensive recreation management area, and managed for low impact activities.
- Special recreation permits would be allowed for events provided there is adequate resource protection.
- Develop three seasonal wild horse viewing sites at Buckhorn Road, near SOB Lake; Lost Creek Road, near Cottonwood Creek; and HWY 299/8A near the Nevada California Border.
- Throughout the Surprise Field Office area, recreational camping is limited to fourteen consecutive days. Campfires are allowed on all lands except when fire restrictions are in effect. Campfire permits are required on public lands in California, but not in Nevada.
- The existing Barrel Springs and Buckhorn scenic byway designations would remain unaltered. Designation of additional scenic byways or vehicle routes would be considered provided they are consistent with OHV designations and resource concerns are addressed.
- Collection of petrified wood would be managed under existing policy.
- Assign Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) classes to all lands to provide a diversity of recreational experiences:
 - Semi-Primitive Non-Motorized 450,636 acres
 - Semi-Primitive Motorized 636,018 acres
 - Roaded Natural 127,038 acres
 - Rural 6,952 acres

Soils

- Implement management practices to promote recovery of 49,894 acres of upland soils not meeting Standards for Rangeland Health.
- Ensure all management activities result in no net loss of soil mass or productivity within the management area.
- Consumptive uses and developments would be restricted to soils which are considered unproductive or most suitable for construction purposes.
- Livestock grazing would be managed to promote healthy watersheds; this necessitates productive soils, natural hydrologic function, biological integrity, and the preservation of biological crusts.
- Employ bio-engineering projects to improve soil condition and achieve 'Proper Functioning Condition' (PFC).
- Apply sediment intrusion buffer zones around sensitive resources on a case-by-case basis.
- Implement mitigation actions to offset soil and productivity losses within the same fifth-level watershed area (conceptually 40,000 – 250,000 acres).

Special Designations: Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC)

- Designate and manage 957 acres of the Rahilly-Gravelly ACEC to conform to the Lakeview Resource Management Plan, 2004.
- Designate the Massacre Rim Area of Critical Environmental Concern, 44,870 acres.
- Designate the Bitner Area of Critical Environmental Concern, 1,921 acres.
- New rights-of-way would be excluded in the Bitner ACEC and avoided in Rahilly-Gravelly and Massacre Rim ACECs.
- Livestock grazing would continue according to permit stipulations and allotment management plans.
- Noxious weeds would be aggressively controlled in all ACECs.
- Firewood, post, or pole cutting for commercial or domestic use will not be allowed in any proposed/designated ACEC.
- An approved plan of operation is required for locatable minerals in an ACEC; other restrictions may apply for salable minerals. The Bitner and Rahilly-Gravelly ACECs would be managed under no surface occupancy restrictions for leasable minerals. Where ACECs overlap WSAs, further constraints on mineral activities apply under the Wilderness IMP.
- Traditional uses by Native Americans would be protected and tribal collecting of plants allowed within proposed/designated ACECs.

Special Designations: Wild & Scenic Rivers (WSR)

- A 2.2 mile section (457 acres) of Twelvemile Creek would be managed to protect and retain suitability for designation as a wild and scenic river.
- Manage this section of Twelvemile Creek as VRM Class II to protect the area's scenic quality.
- Pursue acquisition of non-federal lands along Twelvemile Creek to enlarge the eligible and suitable portion of this stream. This would be done on a voluntarily basis from willing sellers and/or exchange proponents.

Special Designations: Wilderness Study Areas (WSA)

- The existing wilderness study areas (WSAs) and any proposed WSAs would be managed under the "Interim Management Policy for Lands under Wilderness Review" (Wilderness IMP) (USDI BLM 1995, as amended):

Sheldon Contiguous	23,700 acres
South Warner Contiguous	4,500 acres
Massacre Rim	101,290 acres
Wall Canyon	46,305 acres
Buffalo Hill	47,315 acres
- Prioritize acquisition of land parcels within and adjacent to wilderness study areas (on a willing-seller basis).
- Existing and new mining operations under the 1872 mining law would be regulated under 43 CFR 3802 only.
- Any new roads or trails that have been created or discovered would be closed to vehicle use, with the exception of authorized rights-of-way.
- All proposals for uses and/or facilities within WSAs would be reviewed to determine whether the proposal meets the nonimpairment criteria or a permitted exception.
- Assign off-highway vehicle designations in WSAs: Four WSAs: Limited to Designated Routes; One WSA: Closed

Travel Management

- Manage off-highway vehicle (OHV) use to protect resource values, promote public safety, provide OHV use opportunities where appropriate, and minimize conflicts among various users.
- Manage 1,809 miles of routes as the designated route network for access to BLM-administered lands.
- Implement closures on 92 miles of routes within WSAs.
- Assign off-highway vehicle use area designations:
 - Open 0 acres
 - Limited to designated routes 1,208,670 acres
 - Closed 11,994 acres
- An OHV special recreation management area would be developed if the need arises.
- Commercial, competitive, and other organized OHV activities would be managed with special recreation permits.
- Road maintenance would continue at a rate of 30 to 75 miles per year.

Vegetation

- Vegetation manipulation would be prioritized to sagebrush-steppe communities with juniper encroachment, decadent big sagebrush and greasewood stands, and low elevation brush communities dominated by exotic annual grasses.
- Vegetation manipulation will seek to restore natural ecosystems, establish wildfire fuel breaks, and increase forage production for livestock, wildlife, and wild horses.
- Native juniper woodlands would be maintained on approximately 17,500 acres.
- Quaking aspen woodlands would be maintained on at least 1,800 acres. Restore 20 acres of historic aspen stands using seeds, roots, or saplings. Construct 20 acres of new livestock exclosures to protect quaking aspen stands and mountain mahogany.
- Remove invasive juniper within quaking aspen, bitterbrush, and mountain mahogany communities on 10 – 100 acres/year.
- Prioritize restoration of sagebrush–steppe communities on 500 – 4,000 acres/year.
- Restore native grassland communities on 50 – 100 acres/year.
- Restoration of communities encroached by invasive juniper would be treated using prescribed fire, mechanical, chemical, and manual treatments.
- Prioritize restoration treatment methods for removal of invasive juniper within riparian areas on 50 – 100 acres/year.
- Maintain 36,740 acres of existing crested wheatgrass seedings in good condition. Restore 8,400 acres of existing crested wheatgrass seedings in poor condition to native species.

Noxious Weeds & Invasive Species

- Integrated Weed Management (IWM) will continue to promote education and prevention as well as cultural, physical, biological, and chemical treatments.
- All hay, straw, or mulch used on BLM-administered lands must be certified as free from noxious weed seed.
- Cooperative weed control programs will continue on the Upper Alkali Lake restoration project, the Snake Lake experimental medusahead project and on watershed restoration projects in Wall Canyon.
- Conduct IWM inventories in coordination with adjacent weed management areas for early detection of new infestations.

Special Status Plants

- Manage all special status species habitats or occurrences (populations) so that BLM actions do not contribute to the need to list these species as federally threatened or endangered.
- Allow for no more than 20% (by plant species) elimination of occupied habitat and no greater than 20% total decrease in any plant species occurrence, except as directed in biological assessments, biological evaluations, habitat management plans, and conservation strategies/species management guides for specific species.
- Require stipulations during surface disturbing activities (e.g., road construction, trails) to protect special status plant habitat.
- Acquire lands from willing sellers that support unprotected populations of special status plants.
- Special management considerations and permit stipulations that would be applied to protect populations of special status plants would apply equally for special interest species to prevent them from becoming listed as special status plants.
- Manage off-highway vehicle use as 'Limited to Designated Routes' to protect special status plant habitat.

Visual Resources

- Manage all wilderness study areas as VRM Class I.
- Assign VRM Class designations to all BLM-administered lands, and manage lands according to these class requirements, to protect scenic quality:
 - VRM Class I 183,587 acres
 - VRM Class II 437,553 acres
 - VRM Class III 227,134 acres
 - VRM Class IV 372,390 acres
- Manage the (proposed) Twelvemile Creek Wild and Scenic River as VRM Class II criteria. The Massacre Rim, Bitner, and Rahilly-Gravelly ACECs would also be managed as under VRM Class II, in order to preserve the existing character of the landscape.

Water Resources

- Achieve measurable progress toward proper functioning condition (PFC) or desired future condition (DFC) on 53 miles of perennial and intermittent streams and 2,500 acres of riparian/wetland areas.
- Apply restoration treatments to improve hydrologic function and water quality, including bio-engineering treatments, improved livestock grazing strategies, planting woody riparian vegetation, and installing in-stream structures.
- Maintain existing water sources and manage to promote wildlife habitat, improve distribution of livestock and wild horses, and provide for recreational uses.
- Prioritize development of new water sources to extend seasonal water availability for wildlife, and to benefit desired ecosystems.
- Withdraw state-appropriated water rights on waters that are not 'waters of the state'.
- Assert in-stream flow rights in Nevada and riparian rights in California on all perennial and important intermittent streams.
- Projects that involve inter-basin transfer of water would be coordinated with local and regional governments.

Wild Horses and Burros

- Manage wild horses within 8 established herd management areas (HMAs), on 495,821 acres.
- Enlarge the Fox-Hog HMA boundary to 145,244 acres, so that it extends to the actual area of use by wild horses.
- Manage Nut Mountain, Bitner, Wall Canyon, and Massacre Lakes HMAs as a complex.
- Prioritize selection of animals returned to BLM-administered lands after gathers based on traits desirable by public for adoption (color, size and conformance), and for historical traits in the Carter Reservoir HMA only.
- Develop three seasonal wild horse viewing sites at Buckhorn Road, near SOB Lake; Lost Creek Road, near Cottonwood Creek; and HWY 299/8A near the Nevada California Border.
- Maintain herd management area (HMA) populations within established appropriate management levels (AMLs) by conducting periodic gathers.
- Eliminate unnecessary fences and minimize construction of new fences in HMAs that prevent seasonal wild horse movement or migration.
- Implement fertility control in some or all of the HMAs (based on funding) to assist in maintaining populations at AMLs.
- Adjust AMLs when monitoring data indicates wild horse populations are not achieving a thriving natural ecological balance. Remove wild horses found outside HMAs.

Wildlife and Fisheries

- Design and locate new livestock water developments to avoid dewatering natural springs or wetland areas. Outfit all livestock troughs with wildlife access ramps. Strive to provide water at ground level for wildlife at all developments, as feasible.
- Retain vegetation buffers for wildlife cover at water sources, wetlands, and riparian sites.
- Limited operating periods (LOPs) and buffer zones would be implemented as necessary to reduce disturbances to wildlife.
- Follow management guidelines within applicable biological opinions and conservation strategies.
- Acquire lands from willing sellers that contain important habitat for special status and special interest species. Retain lands with important breeding habitats.
- Implement treatments to remove invasive juniper from important wildlife habitats on 250 – 2,500 acres/year. Reduce invasive juniper where it threatens meadow systems and quaking aspen stands, to improve ungulate habitat. Implement juniper reduction to enhance sagebrush ecosystems; focus on providing diverse composition and age classes of shrubs and healthy understory vegetation.
- Remove invasive juniper from bighorn lambing habitat.
- Coordinate bighorn sheep augmentation and reintroduction efforts with game agencies. Provide appropriate habitat throughout the planning area except for the Warner Mountains and Coppersmith Hills.
- If Rocky Mountain elk become established within the field office area, coordinate with state wildlife agencies and other cooperators, including livestock operators, to develop and implement management plans.
- Locally developed conservation strategies or plans developed for sage-grouse, pygmy rabbit, burrowing owl and other special status species would be used to identify high-priority treatment and fire suppression areas.
- Retain and protect caves identified as important to bats. Limit disturbances near identified bat hibernacula and maternity colonies.
- Maintain existing waterfowl nesting islands and structures.
- Protect known raptor nesting trees from removal during project activities.
- Manage migratory birds in accordance with the Migratory Bird Treaty Act and Migratory Bird Executive Order 13186, *Responsibilities of Federal Agencies to Protect Migratory Birds*.
- Coordinate with game agencies in maintenance and construction of wildlife guzzlers.
- Continue cooperative efforts to reintroduce native fauna back into the planning area and do not encourage non-native species introductions.
- Improve fishing opportunities and fish habitat along the east slope of the Warner Mountains (20-25 miles).
- Remove non-native fishes where they are found to be severely impacting native fish.

Environmental Consequences

The potential environmental consequences (or impacts) of the five alternatives were analyzed for each natural resource, resource use, and social and economic conditions in the Draft RMP. Detailed descriptions of the direct and indirect impacts of resource management under the Preferred Alternative are provided in Chapter 4, along with a discussion of the possible cumulative impacts that could result from actions taken in this PRMP. A comparative summary of these impacts (for all alternatives) is provided in the Impacts Summary Table in Chapter 2.

The Preferred Alternative would enhance the ability of BLM to achieve the purpose and need of this document, as outlined in Chapter 1, as well as meet desired future conditions, goals and objectives of specific resources as outlined in Chapter 2.

The Preferred Alternative would result in overall minor to moderate adverse impacts to resources, and these impacts would continue to be mitigated. Management actions under the Preferred Alternative would result in moderate to major beneficial impacts to native vegetation communities from restoration efforts, and the use of prescribed fire to remove invasive juniper. Improvements to riparian areas, water bodies, and other special habitats would improve soil and water resources, and wildlife habitat. The designation of three (archaeological) areas of critical environmental concern, one wild and scenic river, and an increased emphasis on cultural resource protection and management would have beneficial impacts to these important and unique resources.

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Surprise Field Office



May 2007



Public Lands USA: Use, Share, Appreciate